(c) whether Government are aware that some hospitals charge more than the approved charges from the CGHS beneficiaries; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ): (a) to (d) Yes, Sir. The Government has approved ceiling rates for various medical procedures/tests/investigations to enable CGHS beneficiaries avail treatment in private recognized hospitals. The ceiling rates approved for a particular medical procedure/test/investigation vary from one CGHS city to another.

The ceiling rates have been fixed by the Government after taking into account the rates for various medical procedures/tests/investigations fixed by the Government in 1996-97 as base and thereafter suitably enhancing the rate so as to reflect the rise in the cost of medical treatment in the subsequent years.

Each of the private hospitals/diagnostic centers recognized under CGHS have signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) with Director, CGHS. The MOA binds these hospitals/daignostic centers not to charge more than the approved ceiling rates from the CGHS beneficiaries. Monitoring to ensure compliance is done by the CGHS.

Amendment in the Cable TV Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995

*118. SHRI A. VIJAYARAGHAVAN: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal to amend the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995 for regulating the broadcasters;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether any steps are on the anvil for making the Conditional Access System (CAS) more consumer friendly;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) the steps taken to implement CAS; and

(f) the proposed date and regimes for implementation of CAS?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD): (a) There is no proposal at present to amend the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995. However, Government is open to suggestions in respect of an appropriate regulatory framework and to changes for more effective regulation.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) and (d) The following steps have been taken for making the CAS more consumer friendly:-

(i) Government has specified Rs. 72/- (Plux taxes) as the maximum price of basic service tier, consisting of not less than 30 free-to-air channels of different genres of entertainment, news, sports, children's programmes and music. Additional free-to-air channels would also be available to subscribers within the maximum amount mentioned.

(ii) Consumers will have the choice to pay for only those pay channels which they choose to watch. consumers will thus have control over the content, they wish to view, and they can plan their expenditure on cable charges.

(iii) It has been made obligatory for cable operators to make provisions for rent, security deposit, repair and maintenance of Set Top Boxes (STB).

(iv) Some MSOs/Cable Operators have come out with consumer friendly schemes through which the STBs will be made available to consumers.

(v) Government has reduced the duty on import of STB and its components to make the STB more affordable.

(e) The steps taken by Government for implementation of CAS are given in the enclosed statement. (*See* below).

(f) Government has through notification dated 10th July, 2003 proposed implementation of CAS in a zonal-phased manner in the metros of Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and at one go in Channai w.e.f. 1st September, 2003.

Statement

Steps taken by Government for implementation of CAS

(i) The Government had moved a bill to amend the provisions of Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995 to provide for viewing for pay channels through an addressable system. The Bill became an Act on 31.12.2002;

(ii) Government, *vide* Notification dated 14.1.2003, decided to implement CAS in four metros of Delhi, Chennai, Mumbai and Kolkata w.e.f. 15th July, 2003.

(iii) A Task Force was constituted on 28.1.2003, comprising of all stakeholders including cable operators, equipment Manufacturers and Consumer Groups, to consider various issues relating to implementation of CAS including fixing of the price, size and composition of basic service tier of free-to-air channels;

(iv) Cost Accounts Branch of Ministry of finance, was consulted for fixing of the price and composition of basic service tier of free to air channels.

(v) A survey was conducted by M/s ORG MARG through BECIL and findings were presented to Task Force.

(vi) On the recommendation of the Task force, Government has specified Rs. 72/- (Plus taxes) as the maximum price of basic service tier, consisting of not less than 30 free-to-air channels of different genres of entertainment, news, sports, children's programmes and music. Additional free-to-air channels would also be available to subscribers within the maximum amount mentioned.

(vii) The Cable Television (Amendment) Rules, 2003 has been notified on 6.6.2003 specify the manner of publicizing the subscription rates of pay channels, submission of quarterly report by cable operators, declaration of channels as "free-to-air" and "pay", etc. These Rules, *inter-alia*, provide that:-

(a) subscriber shall not be forced to buy more than the channel(s) of his choice through the mechanism of discounted pricing and by grouping of channels;

(b) the cable operator shall make provisions for rent and security deposit or refund thereof as well as warranty, repair and maintenance in the manner notified by the Government.

(viii) To educate the subscribers, Government has carried out a multi media publicity campaign through newspapers, TV and Radio.

(ix) Government has reduced the duty on import of STB to make it affordable to the consumers.

(x) Government has also reduced the duty on the import of components of STBs and abolished the excise duty on these, in order to boost the indigenous production of STB in India.

(xi) After monitoring the preparedness of stakeholders to introduce addressability and after discussions with various stakeholders, namely Broadcasters, Multi System Operators, Cable Operators, Consumer groups, etc. it has been decided to roll out the CAS in a zonal phased manner, in the metros of Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata and in the Chennai Metropolitan area, w.e.f. 1.9.2003. The notification was issued on 10th July, 2003. The intervening period will be utilized to step up preparedness for smooth roll out of CAS and for educating the subscribers.

(xii) Government is monitoring the status of import of STBs by MSOs.

(xiii) Government has deputed experts to inspect and test check of STBs to be utilized by MSOs at their premises, as well as in the manufacturing units abroad, to ensure the quality of STBs as specified by Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS).

Duty on imported tea

*119. SHRI S.P.M. SYED KHAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received any request from the Government of Tamil Nadu to enhance duty on imported tea up to 150 per cent; and

(b) if so, the action taken by Government thereon?